

# A strong Farm Bill important for all of Alabama

By EDWIN MARTY

Next month, the U.S. Congress will enact this nation's most important piece of food and farm legislation — the 2007 Farm Bill. It is important for Jefferson County and all of Alabama because it affects the health and well-being of all of us — not just farmers, but everyone who eats food.

A broad base of organizations and individuals in Alabama has come together in support of a farm bill that promotes healthful food for all and fairly supports the farmers who grow that food. These include the Alabama Sustainable Agriculture Network, the Food Security Coalition of Jefferson County, Jones Valley Urban Farm, Magic City Harvest, People Helping People Urban Farm in Bessemer, PEER

(Promoting Empowerment & Enrichment Resources) in East Lake, Christian Service Mission and many others.

The Community Food Projects program is a great example of the kind of program we are supporting. This program has enabled 250 communities across the nation to develop solutions to their own hunger, nutrition and farm problems. In Alabama, a Community Food Projects grant has enabled Jones Valley Urban Farm to develop a community garden in downtown Birmingham as well as get fresh organic produce into low-income households. Community Food Projects promotes up-by-the-bootstraps community problem-solving, but the entire federal program only receives \$5 million a year. With \$60 million, which advocates are requesting,

this program could make a positive impact on thousands of communities.

Bringing fresh, healthful food to children in schools should be a critical piece of the Farm Bill. A small number of Alabama schools currently enjoy fruits and vegetables grown right here in the state as part of a pilot lunch program. The Farm Bill's proposed Farm to Cafeteria program would enable this program to expand substantially. Our children could also have increased access to produce grown by state farmers if the Farm Bill permitted revision of U.S. Department of Agriculture rules that limit schools' ability to give preference to food produced within our state. Both of these measures would improve the quality of meals and snacks served to Alabama students,

which is especially important in a state where an estimated 340,000 children are overweight.

Expansion of programs such as the Farmers Market Nutrition Program and the Farmers Market Promotion Program would support the growing number of farmers markets around the state to provide garden-fresh food to consumers, particularly senior citizens and individuals with low incomes.

These markets often provide multiple benefits to communities.

The East Lake Farmers Market, for example, is in one of east Birmingham's lower-income communities and fills a void by providing produce in an area where access to fresh fruits and vegetables is limited. Local residents can purchase produce di-

rectly from participating farmers on Saturday mornings or can subscribe to the weekly market basket program, ensuring an ongoing supply of wholesome foods throughout Alabama's long growing season at a moderate price.

Another program, Environmental Quality Incentives Program, shared costs with the People Helping People farm in Bessemer to install systems designed to increase the amount of food it could grow for its community and to provide some protection against drought. Programs such as EQIP benefit small farmers and encourage conservation practices to help ensure that the freshest fruits and vegetables will be available through our schools, markets and stores.

The final outcome of the 2007

Farm Bill has a direct impact on the well-being of our communities and our families. U.S. Rep. Artur Davis, D-Birmingham, has taken a leadership role in strengthening the Farm Bill by co-sponsoring legislation that promotes agriculture in urban areas and provides low-income women, children and seniors and school cafeterias access to fresh, locally grown produce.

We urge all Alabamians interested in supporting local economies, small farmers, fair and equal access to fresh produce, healthier diets, better nutrition, healthier families and stronger communities to call for a strong Farm Bill at this critical point in the legislative process.

Edwin Marty is director of the Jones Valley Urban Farm. E-mail: director@jvuf.org.

## The MARLBORO JOURNAL of MEDICINE

BY MATT BORS

**A NEW BILL, THE FAMILY SMOKING PREVENTION AND TOBACCO CONTROL ACT, PROPOSES PUTTING THE CLAIMS OF CIGARETTE COMPANIES UNDER THE MICROSCOPE OF THE FDA TO EVALUATE "SAFETY STANDARDS" FOR THIS UNSAFE-BY-ANY-STANDARD PRODUCT.**

WE MADE THE BILL TITLE SO LONG ONLY NON-SMOKERS HAVE THE LUNG POWER TO SAY IT IN ONE BREATH.

**THE NAME ALMOST DARES LAWMAKERS TO VOTE AGAINST IT.**

I SUPPORT ALL BILLS WITH THE WORDS "CHILD," "FAMILY" AND "MOTHER TERESA'S HALO" IN IT!

**THE BILL WILL BAN THE TERM "LIGHTS" AND HEAVILY REGULATE DIP AND CHEW.**

EVERY GOB SHINES LIKE GOLD!  
UNSAFE!

**NEW BRANDS LIKE "LIGHT AND LUSCIOUS" CAMEL No. 9's WILL BE OUTLAWED.**

THEY MISLEAD THE FRAGILE FEMALE MIND.

**GOOD NEWS... FOR PHILIP MORRIS, THE BIGGEST BACKER OF THE BILL ALONG WITH THE AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY.**

WE'RE LOOKING FORWARD TO EXPANDING OUR 50% SHARE OF THE CANCER MARKET!

**MOST OF THE COWBOY KILLER'S EXISTING AND POTENTIAL COMPETITORS WILL BE SNUBBED OUT BY THE FDA.**

20 CLASS A NON-DECEITFUL SMOKES  
PHILIP MORRIS  
GOVERNMENT APPROVED!

**HOPEFULLY, THEY WILL USE THIS RIGOROUS PROCESS FOR ALL NEW PRODUCTS.**

WE BANNED THE CLOROXY HEALTH DRINK.  
BUT ONLY BECAUSE IT HAD A CARTOON SPOKESMAN!

**WHEN YOU'RE DYING, YOU CAN USE FDA-APPROVED CANCER DRUGS!**

IT'S A ONE-STOP AGENCY FOR EVERYTHING I NEED!

**PERHAPS LEGISLATION SHOULD HAVE WARNING LABELS AS WELL.**

WARNING: READ BILL BEFORE PASSING. PHILIP MORRIS' DOUBLETALK AND HEALTH GROUP'S GULLIBILITY MAY IMPAIR COMMON SENSE.

A TIP OF THE NIB TO ALAN BLUM, MD ©2007 MATT BORS SPECIAL

A bill before Congress would let the Food and Drug Administration regulate tobacco products but not permit it to ban the sale or promotion of cigarettes. The bill is likely to come up for a committee vote in the Senate in July. Dr. Alan Blum, director of the University of Alabama Center for the Study of Tobacco and Society, testified against the bill at the committee's hearing earlier this year. Blum worked with cartoonist Matt Bors of Portland, Ore., to shed light on the bill's glaring inconsistencies and the strange bedfellows who are supporting it. E-mail: ablum@cchs.ua.edu.

## REVERSAL: Allegations plugged into racial paradigm

From Page 1B

prostitutes in Huntsville. Apparently, to avoid getting into trouble themselves, they told a tale of having been brutally gang-raped by the nine blacks. The blacks were taken to the jail in Scottsboro, the county seat. Because the circumstances of the women's story — black men attacking and raping white women — fit the prevailing racial paradigm of the local white population, guilt was assumed and the governor was forced to call out the National Guard to prevent a lynch mob from hanging the men on the spot. The nine were indicted on March 30, and, by the end of April, all had been tried, convicted and sentenced to death (except for the one who was 13 years old, who was sentenced to life in prison). A year later, the Alabama Supreme Court upheld the convictions of those on Death Row, except for one who was determined to be a juvenile. By this time, however, the "Scottsboro Boys" had become a national and even international story, with rallies taking place in many cities in the North. Thousands of letters poured into the Alabama courts and the governor's office demanding justice.

The International Labor Defense, the legal arm of the Communist Party USA, provided competent legal help, and the convictions were overturned by the U.S. Supreme Court because the defendants had not received adequate counsel. Samuel Leibowitz, a highly successful New York trial lawyer (he would later serve on the state's highest court) was hired to defend the accused in a second trial, held in De-

catur. This turned out to be a tactical error, as Leibowitz was perceived by the local jury pool — all of them white, of course — as an outsider, a Jew and a communist (which he was not). Even though Ruby Bates repudiated her earlier testimony and said no rape had taken place, the accused were again convicted, this time the jury believing that Bates had been bribed to perjure herself.

Again, the sentences were overturned, and in 1937 — six years after the case began — four of the defendants had the charges dropped. One pleaded guilty to having assaulted the sheriff (and was sentenced to 20 years) and the other four were found guilty, once again, of rape. Eventually, as Jim Crow began to yield to the civil rights movement, they were paroled or pardoned, except for one who had escaped from prison and fled to Michigan. When he was caught in the 1950s, the governor of Michigan refused to allow his extradition to Alabama. It is now clear to everyone that the nine Scottsboro boys were guilty only of being black.

### An election ploy

When the accuser in the Duke case charged rape, the district attorney — in the midst of a tough primary election — saw an opportunity to curry favor with Durham's black community and exploit the town-gown tension found in every college town. He ran with it, inflaming public opinion against the accused at every opportunity.

To be sure, there was no lynch mob, which happily is almost inconceivable today. But many Duke University students and faculty, and many members of the media (Nancy Grace of Court TV comes to mind), simply plugged the alleged circumstances into their racial paradigm — wealthy white col-

lege jocks partying and behaving badly with regard to a poor black woman — and pronounced the Duke boys guilty. Wanted posters went up on campus with pictures of the accused; 88 members of the faculty sponsored an ad in the college paper effectively supporting the posters; and the university president suspended two of the accused upon their indictment (the third had already graduated), canceled the rest of the season for the lacrosse team and forced the resignation of the team coach.

Here is where the real difference between the Scottsboro boys and the Duke boys kicked in: not race but money. The Scottsboro boys were destitute and spent years in jail, while the Duke boys were all from families that could afford first-class legal talent. Their lawyers quickly began blowing hole after hole in the case and releasing the facts to the media until it was obvious that a miscarriage of justice had occurred. The three Duke boys were guilty only of being white and affluent.

The district attorney won his election. But when the case fell apart and his almost grotesque malfeasance was exposed, he first resigned his office and ultimately was disbarred from the practice of law. Duke University has just settled with the three students it treated so shamefully for an undisclosed, but given the university's legal exposure, undoubtedly substantial sum. Meanwhile, the 88 members of the faculty have yet to apologize for a rush to judgment that was racist at its heart.

The country has come a long, long way in regard to race relations since 1931. But we have not yet reached the promised land where race is irrelevant. Far too many people are still being judged according to the color of their skin, not the content of their character, let alone the evidence.

## GREAT LAKES: Sun Belt states need this vast reservoir

From Page 1B

While we don't really want that much water on Birmingham yards or Alabama farm lands, we will need access to a reservoir of that magnitude if long-term economic prosperity is desired.

So let's build a consortium of Sun Belt states, ante up some money and design an Alaska-like water pipeline system. We then secure federal financing for its implementation, extract that precious Midwest resource and pump it to regions in need. Sounds wonderful, but wait a minute. There are a few political snags.

There is Canada, of course, which shares an international border in the middle of four Great Lakes. The semi-autonomous province of Ontario controls those borders. Eight U.S. states share the Great Lakes shores, and they have learned from us how to act pretty autonomous under the constitutional guise of "states' rights." International treaty and federal law prohibit any diversion of Great Lakes water without the unanimous approval of those states' governors plus Ontario's premier. But you say, reason should always trump politics just like it may someday in Alabama. Certainly, they will understand our projected plight, see the value of creating new jobs to build the pipeline, and happily coffer the profits from selling fresh water to Alabama at a fair market price. Maybe, but here's the rub.

Midwesterners hate Sun Belt states and those who dwell within them. Like middle-class Mexicans who politely despise their cousins for migrating north for better jobs, those remaining in the Midwest quietly frown upon their expatriates who moved south: They just couldn't "cut it" back home. They also hate the rest of us.

Before becoming sole proprietors of the "rust belt," Midwesterners truly knew the good life: a growing population expanding its national political clout and greater economic viability resulting in higher wages, more jobs, stronger tax bases and tremendous educational opportunities for their children.

Even though times now are much better up there, Midwesterners still recall that Sun Belt states took advantage by luring lucrative corporations and entire industries with campaigns about good weather, few taxes, no unions, low wages and a poorly educated but trainable labor pool.

The contempt is real. Where the unofficial motto is "last one leaving the state, turn off the lights," some Michigan officials long for the day when the Sun Belt needs "their" water so badly it will agree to anything. In pubs around the Lansing statehouse, one hears the stirring cry that Alabama stole the auto industry, and Detroit wants it back. The same is true in other settings. Gary, Ind., feels robbed of the steel industry, and Milwaukee's breweries were last seen stumbling southward. An Ohio state senator once told me her goal is to recapture the space and aeronautics industry from Huntsville and Houston.

Jesus says to love our neighbor, but political memory and human perception make that a very hard sell. No one can deny the value of having access to Great Lakes water, but no breathing politician — Northern, Southern or Canadian — will quickly turn the other cheek and give way to serious compromise on what each considers a truly "fair market price." It will take prolonged, frank discussions to hammer out the past and make this happen for our future.

By the end of this century, Alabama and other Sun Belt states are destined to need this vast reservoir if we desire continued prosperity — but there will be eight Midwest governors and one Ontario premier who will entertain our hopes and dreams in their own way.

The question for current Sun Belt leaders is this: Should our efforts be directed solely toward a search for relative stop-gap measures, or should we risk some investment in opening a dialog with Great Lakes leaders about a truly long-term, comprehensive solution? Our actions might well haunt our great-grandchildren and their bosses when they ask: Is it cheaper to bring the water here or move everything there?

Winters in Green Bay and Toronto really aren't that awful, but just thinking about it somehow makes me want a glass of water.

## WATER WORKS: Are problems really related to drought?

From Page 1B

liveliness and gardeners are becoming even more water savvy than ever, the Water Works states it "won't be able to handle the demand of all users around 2025."

The Water Works, which has had supply problems in three out of the past eight years, is predicting it will have trouble supplying its customers 18 years from now.

Is it possible the problems with our water supply are something other than drought-related? Tuscaloosa is drier than Birmingham, but there are no restrictions there yet. Bessemer is doing OK and has even offered to sell water to the Water Works, but has been turned down, just as the Water Works turned down Shelby County's offer during the drought emergency in the fall of 2000. Huntsville is in the midst of the brownest spot on the drought monitor map with no restrictions yet. Auburn's managing to get by. Most of the systems that are not connected to the Water Works, at this time, have voluntary restrictions at the most. It is the Water Works that has, once again, led the wail of "water shortage."

While this may change as the dry weather continues, here's the point: The drought conditions are widespread; the Stage 3 drought emergency surcharge panic is not.

Don't get me wrong. Nothing frustrates me more than seeing automatic irrigation systems being used improperly and too often. Their use should be restricted, reasonably, every year from March 1 until Nov. 1, no matter what the rainfall totals are.

But it seems like a pattern is emerging. During 2000, there were many other localities in the Southeast that had received less rainfall than Birmingham, but did not have to institute an outdoor watering ban. In 2006, when the Bir-

mingham area was actually more than four inches above average in rainfall, the Water Works instituted Stage 2 drought restrictions.

Since that fateful fall of 2000, the Water Works has drilled no supplementary wells to help recharge Lake Purdy when its level falls. To my knowledge, it has connected to no quarries. There are no new pipelines to rivers, but there are many more taps to new customers.

At a Water Resources Conference held earlier this month in Auburn, experts discussed that older water systems can lose anywhere from 20 percent to 30 percent of their water in pipeline leaks; the lag time between repair calls to the Water Works and the arrival of a repair crew is often noteworthy for its length.

There is no one to hold the Water Works accountable — not shareholders, not the Public Service Commission. It answers only to the Birmingham City Council, which rubber-stamped (except for Valerie Abbott's lone nay vote) Realtor Anthony Barnes as chairman of the board despite the fact he has long overstayed his tenure by the council's own definition. The system under his leadership continues to overextend its ability to supply and doesn't recognize, or at least won't admit, the immediacy of a problem that is staring it in the face. Upon announcing the water ban in 2000, the Water Works declared there would be "no economic impact" to the decision. A financial bloodbath ensued for those involved in the green industry.

Why do I care? I have been a wholesale grower of annuals and perennials for 25 years, and many of my customers are in the Water Works service area. What affects them affects my company, my family, our employees and their families.

The first step in finding a solution is identifying the problem. Birmingham needs a reliable water supply; at this time, it does not have one. It will take new vision and fresh faces at the Water Works for that to occur.

It's time for new leadership on the Birmingham Water Works Board.